

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR PDIP KS US

SUBJ: KIM CASE AND ITS AFTERMATH IN KOREA

SUMMARY: AS CONSEQUENCE RECENT PUBLICITY IN US, MOOD OF GLOOM DEEPENING IN KOREA FOR FUTURE OF ITS TIES WITH US, GIVING GREATER IMPETUS TO THOUGHTS OF "SELF-RELIANCE."

1. WHILE THERE IS PRESS BLACKOUT ON DEFECTION OF KCIA AGENT KIM SUNG KUN, THE NEWS IS WIDELY KNOWN WITHIN KOREAN ESTABLISHMENT CIRCLES. REACTION OF THOSE WHO HAVERAISED KIM CASE WITH ME IS ONE OF DEEPENING CONCERN, AND EVEN GLOOM, AS WELL AS FRUSTRATION REGARDING INABILITY TO CONTAIN DAMAGE TO KOREA'S IMAGE IN US. IN FACT WE SENSE GROWING FEAR HERE THAT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS COULD LEAD TO MAJOR FISSURE IN US-ROK RELATIONSHIP.

2. KOREANS IN CONTACT WITH US RECOGNIZE PAST EFFORTS TO INFLUENCE CONGRESS AND OTHERS IN US WERE, AT MINIMUM, MISGUIDED. ALTHOUGH THEY RATIONALIZE "GIFT-GIVING" IS STANDARD PRACTICE IN THIS PART OF WORLD, THEY VIEW REPERCUSSIONS IN US AS RESULT RECENT REPORTS AND NOW DEFECTION OF KIM AS FAR MORE SEVERE THAN MERITED AS FAR AS KOREANS ARE CONCERNED.

3. WHAT UNDERLIES KOREAN CONCERN ABOUT IMPACT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IS FEAR THAT IT WILL IMPACT ADVERSELY ON PROSPECTS OF REACHING UNDERSTANDING ON US-KOREAN RELATIONS WITH PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER. EVEN BEFORE THESE DEVELOPMENTS, KOREANS WERE VERY ANXIOUS ABOUT POLICIES TOWARD KOREA THAT MIGHT BE ADOPTED BY NEW ADMINIS-

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TRATION. DISCUSSION OF TROOP WITHDRAWAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

DURING CAMPAIGN HAD ALREADY LED TO STRONG ELEMENT OF UNCERTAINTY REGARDING LONG TERM CREDIBILITY OF AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO KOREA, WHICH VIETNAM COLLAPSE HAD PREVIOUSLY CALLED INTO QUESTION. UNCERTAINTY IS NOW THAT MUCH GREATER.

4. KOREANS ARE EQUALLY FRUSTRATED BY INABILITY TO FIND WHAT ONE SENIOR PRO-GOVERNMENT POLITICIAN CALLED "MAGIC PILL" TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS IN US. FOREIGN MINISTER HAS ON ALMOST EVERY OCCASION I HAVE SEEN HIM SOUGHT RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO CLEAR UP PROBLEM AND HAS HOPED THAT WITHDRAWAL OF KCIA WOULD BE VIEWED AS IMPORTANT HELPFUL GESTURE ON KOREAN PART. WHAT STINGS MOST DEEPLY WITHIN ESTABLISHMENT THAT RUNS KOREA IS ATTACK ON PRESIDENT PARK WHICH HAS LED TO PERCEPTION THAT AMERICAN PRESS AT LEAST IS SEEKING HIS PERSONAL DOWNFALL. I HAVE OFFERED LITTLE SOLACE OR ADVICE EXCEPT TO URGE THAT THEY RECOGNIZE PUBLICLY THEIR PAST MISTAKES AND CAREFULLY AND OBJECTIVELY STUDY THE PROBLEMS KOREA FACES IN US. BUT THERE IS ALMOST UNIVERSAL VIEW HERE THAT IN ABSENCE OF ANY LENDING HAND FROM USG, THERE IS LITTLE FOR KOREA TO DO BUT TRY TO RIDE OUT THE STORM. SEVERAL KEY MINISTERS, FONMIN AND MINISTER INFORMATION, HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY HAVE ADVISED MORE ACTIVE APPROACH, BUT HAVE BEEN TURNED DOWN ON GROUNDS ROKG ACTIONS USELESS SINCE "STATE DEPARTMENT" IS NOT PREPARED TO HELP, WHICH I HAVE SOUGHT TO REBUT. FAILURE TO GAIN ACCESS TO KIM HAS SERVED TO INCREASE KOREAN FRUSTRATION AND VIEW AMONG SOME, WHICH IS ADMITTEDLY EMOTIONAL, THAT USG ITSELF IS NOT PREPARED TO HELP IN EFFORT TO CONTAIN DAMAGE TO US RELATIONSHIP WITH KOREA.

5. WE IN EMBASSY ARE EVEN MORE CONCERNED ABOUT LONGER-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF KOREAN REACTION TO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS. ALREADY WE ARE HEARING FROM MANY SOURCES INCREASED TALK ABOUT SELF-RELIANCE AS ONLY SOLUTION FOR KOREA AND, AS INDICATED BY FORMER PRIME MINISTER KIM CHONG-PIL (SEOUL 9256), QUIET DEBATE IS IN PROGRESS ON ISSUE OF WHETHER KOREA SHOULD CONTINUE TO MAKE POSITIVE EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN US RELATIONSHIP, OR IN EFFECT BE PREPARED TO "GO-IT-ALONE." WHAT WAS, AT ITS INCEPTION, CONTINGENCY PLAN IN EVENT US PULLED OUT OF KOREA COULD EMERGE FROM PRESENT MOOD AS PREFERRED COURSE OF ACTION, WHATEVER THE MAJOR COSTS TO KOREA. I DOUBT THAT ANY IRREVOCABLE DECISION HAS BEEN MADE AS YET ALONG THESE LINES, AND IS UNLIKELY TO BE MADE FOR SOME MONTHS AT LEAST. HOWEVER, THE IMPULSE TO A "SELF-RELIANT,"

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"INDEPENDENT" POLICY HAS BEEN GIVEN DECIDED IMPETUS IN RECENT WEEKS.

6. WE CONTINUE TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO EXPLAIN FULLY US HANDLING OF ALLEGED SCANDALS, AND ALLEGATION OF BLUE HOUSE BUGGING, AND KCIA AGENT KIM. WHAT KOREANS ARE LOOKING FOR IS CONTINUED EVIDENCE THAT USG IS CONCERNED TO CONTAIN CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS SO THAT THEY DO NOT IMPAIR FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR COOPERATIVE US-ROK RELATIONSHIP ON MUTUAL REPEAT MUTUAL BASIS.

7. IF WE ARE TO SUSTAIN A VIABLE RELATIONSHIP WITH KOREA SATISFACTORY TO US, THERE ARE OTHER, IN OUR VIEW, MORE CRITICAL ISSUES TO FACE UP TO, SUCH AS NUCLEAR-MISSILE DEVELOPMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, AND POSSIBLE TROOP REDUCTION. YET, WE FEAR THAT DRIVING ELEMENT IN OUR RELATIONSHIP COULD EASILY BECOME ISSUE OF ALLEGED BRIBERY, INCLUDING HANDLING OF KIM. WHATEVER THE INIQUITIES OF KOREAN LOBBYING, THIS SHOULD NOT BE THE ISSUE THAT DOMINATES THE DIALOGUE ON THE FUTURE CONDUCT OF RELATIONS WITH KOREA. IF WE MUST HAVE A SERIOUS DIALOGUE ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS, LET IT BE OVER MORE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES.

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